Old times rocks

Herbert Stanley Renton

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OLD TIMES ROCKS

Golden Days Recalled

—by—

HERBERT STANLEY RENTON

Author of "In Early Days", "A Day and Night in a Volcano", etc.

JUNE 1914.

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EDWARD L. DAVENPORT. J. W. WALLACK, JR.

My theme is the Theatre and my special subject *The Greatest Actor I Ever Saw.*

Mightiest in majestic presence and beyond compare vocally was EDWIN FORREST; (1806-72) but he was not my greatest actor. Nor was EDWIN BOOTH (1833-93) with all the sweetness and power of his *Hamlet* or his most wonderful Bertuccio in *"The Fool's Revenge."*

JOHN MCCULLOUGH, (1837-85) even in his greatest impersonations, *Virginius,* and *Coriolanus,* was not my greatest actor.

LAWRENCE BARRETT as Lanciotto.

EDWARD L. DAVENPORT (1816-77), that splendid player versatile and remarkable as *Brutus* in *"Julius Caesar," Sir Giles Overreach* in *"A New Way to Pay Old Debts,"* or *William, the Sailor,* in *"Black Eyed Susan"*—was not the superlative one.

Nor JAMES W. WALLACK, the younger (1818-74), *the best of all the Wallacks*—though far superior to HENRY IRVING in *"The Bells."* I saw him in this play twelve years before Irving came to America.

TOMASO SALVINI (born 1829) had next to FORREST the greatest voice ever heard on the Stage.

His *Othello* and *Saul, King of Israel,* live in my memory as if seen and heard but an hour ago.

HENRY IRVING (1838-1905) was always a wonderful *Picture*—but not

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EDWIN ADAMS

the greatest actor—as one old New York critic would have us believe.

ROSSI, the Italian, was a splendid *Hamlet* and a very great actor, who like SALVINI had all of the Southern fire and wealth of pantomime so noticeably absent in our English players. But ROSSI does not deserve the palm.

LAWRENCE BARRETT (1838-91) was an actor who took infinite pains. His *Yorick, Lanciotto,* and *Harebell* in *"The Man O, Airlie"* were splendid performances. His *Legardere* in *"The Duke's Motto"—Rienzi the Last of the Roman Tribunes* and his *Dan'l Druce* the *Blacksmith of Worcester,* were truly remarkable. I can hear him now as he lifts aloft the abandoned infant—exclaiming, *"It is the Lord's Gift,"* and again in *"Francesca Da Rimini"* when he ran the gamut in calling his brother *"Paulo!"* Beautiful player as BARRETT was, I cannot call him greatest.

EDWIN ADAMS (1834-77) exercised an extraordinary charm over his audiences. I cannot forget his despairing cry when as *Enoch Arden,* he returns from his long term upon the island where he had been shipwrecked, and creeping to the door of his old home—he finds his wife married to PHILIP RAY; and she is telling the story of Enoch Arden going to sea, to her children (hers not his) concluding with the words:—"He was cast away and lost!" Throwing himself down on the ground he repeats: "Cast away and lost!" "Cast away and lost!" EDWIN ADAMS' voice was wonderfully sweet and penetrating, but he was not beyond all the others as an actor.

D.H. HARKINS.

NOR DAN HARKINS (1836-1908) fine player, and versed in all the lore of the Stage as he was—nor yet EDWARD EDDY (1816-75), the idol of the Bowery Theatre patrons, whose slogan was "Eddy! Eddy! Eddy!" He had a good voice, and was extremely popular in *Macbeth, Richard* and the Shakesperian line, as well as in lurid dramas such as the *"Police Spy," "Gio the Armorer of Tyre," "Monte Cristo"* (years before JAMES O'NEILL essayed the part), the *"Wandering Jew," "Six Degrees of Crime"* and many more of that ilk.

J. B. STUDLEY (1831-1911) was a popular favorite too, but he played at the Fifth Avenue, the Grand Opera House and Niblos far oftener than at the Bowery Theatre. He was a star admired in all

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EDWARD EDDY.

the cities of the United States in the Sixties, Seventies and Eighties. A forgotten Star—WM. H. WHALLEY (1831-75) was a favorite in Boston—on the road with LUCILLE WESTERN (1843-77) as BILL SYKES, and at the Bowery in plays like *"La Tour De Nesle," "Jack Sheppard"* (a part played frequently by that really great actress FANNY HERRING) and *Ned Scarlet the Great Highwayman."*

WHALLEY was good in the *legitimate* also—one of the greatest if he had "let rum alone." Drink cut short the career of this wonderful actor—and it has shortened the days of many another. No one in the Bowery then will do for my greatest actor. I never saw JOHN R. SCOTT (1808-56), THOS. HAMBLIN (1800-53), nor EDMON S. CONNER (1809-91), but FRANK MAYO (born 1839) was a fine Shakesperian actor and grieved all his days because he had to play *Badger* in *"The Streets of New York"* and *Davy Crockett* rather than the classic parts he loved so well. The public wanted the romantic roles and the quaint *"Puddin' Head Wilson"* of Mark Twain in which, his last part, he "stood them up" and "turned 'em away." I do not call FRANK MAYO greatest, though to my mind a very great actor.

CHATHAM THEATRE

CONTINUED AND EXTRAORDINARY SUCCESS!!

Friday Evening, August 4, 1842,

Macbeth

KING OF SCOTLAND.

MACBETH, Mr. J. R. SCOTT

MACDUFF, Mr. J. R. KIRBY

FIRST SINGING WITCH, Mrs. THORNE

Miller's Maid!

In my youth FRED B. CONWAY (1812-72) was called "the best general actor in America." He starred; supported FORREST, and was a fine Shakesperian. In classic roles like *Ingomar* I admired him greatly and wondered at his versatility when I saw him as *Byke the Bum* in Augustin Daly's *"Under the Gaslight."* Yet was he not the greatest. There were a lot of fine players in the Sixties and Seventies—CHARLES R. THORNE, JR., FRANK ROCHE, a splendid player; TOM KEENE (1840-98), whom I saw for years, beginning in 1869, at Woods' Museum in New York, before he went to San Francisco and became a star, and afterward in 1893 I saw him as *Richard* at the *Union Square*. FRANK BANGS was a great *Mark Antony* and the original *Old Tom in* Boucicault's *"After Dark."* WALTER MONTGOMERY developed extraordinary talent during his short career. His hands have been folded these forty years.

McKEAN BUCHANAN (born 1823)

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F. B. Conway.

"made Rome howl" and he was really a better gambler than actor, for he could always *play* to win at games of chance to recoup his losses in the mimetic *play*. He was a better actor than he was given credit for, just the same.

Prime favorites were George C. Boniface, the elder (1833-1912), and J. B. Roberts (born 1818) "Cocky Roberts" and that fine actor who belonged to the day of the Elder Booth (1796-1852) and Wm. Pelby (1793-1850), but who left the stage for the reader's desk—James E. Murdoch (1811-93). I never saw that mighty Irish tragedian, Gustavus Vaughn Brooke (1819-66). His voice was said to have almost rivalled Forrest's in its strength. We are told that another phenomenal voice was possessed by Forrest's early rival, Augustus A. Addams (1806-51), who like Chas. H. Eaton (1813-43) and David Ingersoll (1810-47), exponents of tragedy, were too early for my time.

I have been speaking of leaders of the classic drama and I mention here comedians and so-called eccentric actors, incidentally only —they flourished mightily in the last fifty years—and some day I expect to say something about scores of players whom I shall not be able to find room for in this talk. Great women there were and hundreds of leading ladies who are perforce left out of the present study. No one alive to-day can at all approach that great line of stage heroines—Charlotte Cushman (1816-76), Jean Davenport-Lander (born 1830), Mrs. D. P. Bowers (born 1830), Fanny Herring (1832-1906), Mrs. W. G. Jones (1828-1907), Matilda Heron (1830-77), Adah Isaacs Menken (1835-68), Janaushek, whose first appearance in New York was in 1867, Laura Keene (1830-74), Rose Eytinge (1835-1912), Adelaide Neilson (1848-80), Ristori (1826-1912), Marie Seebach, the German Tragic Queen, Rachel (1821-58), Mrs. F. B. Conway (1842-74), Emma Waller, who rivaled Charlotte Cushman as *Meg Merrilies*, Mrs. Duff (1794-1857), or Kate Bateman, born in 1843 and brought up on the stage from infancy—the "Leah the Forsaken" and *Mary Warner* of the Seventies.

Thomas Wallace Keene.

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JOHN MCCULLOUGH.

BERNHARDT plays a line of exotic parts, and is a veritable wonder, but she does not approach in variety and versatility one of the old tragic queens like MRS. BOWERS or MRS. LANDER. I trow not! My friend JAMES S. HUTTON, the old manager, has managed many of the early stars and he will bear me out in this.

MARY ANDERSON (born 1859) created a profound sensation when at sixteen she appeared in Louisville. Then from California to New England the beautiful Shakesperian star became the wonder and pride of her generation, but she retired after about a dozen years of artistic triumph to private life.

LUCILLE WESTERN (1843-77) came very near being the greatest actress of her time in plays like *"The Child Stealer," "East Lynne," "The Sea of Ice"* and *"Green Bushes."* As *Ogarita* the *Wild Flower of Mexico* and the Indian Princess, *"Huntress of the Mississippi,"* LUCILLE WESTERN was a wonderful picture. None could equal her *Nancy Sykes. Sonorous* and *Eke Melifluous* were the titles of those old time dramas.

But we were searching for the greatest *actor*, not *actress*. A stage genius was MAURICE BARRYMORE, a reliable actor was CHARLES BARRON and WILLIAM REDMUND, too. Versed in all the lore of the actor's art were CHAS. WHEATLEIGH, BARTON HILL, FRANK MORDAUNT and LEWIS MORRISON. A *creator* was EDWARD A. SOTHERN, father of EDWARD H. SOTHERN. He sent his audiences into convulsions with his *Sydney Spoonbill, Crushed Tragedian* and *Dundreary*. He made them cry as *David Garrick*. No one has approached SOTHERN as *Garrick*—not even CHAS. WYNDHAM, superb comedian as he was and is to-day.

EDWIN FORREST.

Coming closer to the present day EDWARD S. WILLARD has given some

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remarkable specimens of acting in *"John Needham's Double"* and *"The Middleman."* In the latter play as *Cyrus Blenkarn,* the old potter, he identified himself closely with the character and his impersonation was remarkable.

WILLARD was a *real* actor. And so was RICHARD MANSFIELD, especially in satirical, saturnine and sardonic parts. MANSFIELD'S *Ivan the Terrible* was a wonderful performance and his *Beau Brummel* (in which he was so beautifully assisted by W. J. FERGUSON as *Mortimer*) was a fine study. MANSFIELD showed the influence of HENRY IRVING in such parts as *Don Juan* and *Don Carlos.* He was a better *Richard* and *Shylock* than the critics would admit, and his *Brutus* though abused by the dramatic writers because he did not hold his head up as did DAVENPORT and other wearers of the toga, was to me a very fine and beautiful performance. The trouble with the critics is that they have not seen much real acting, except two or three of the older ones, and they have turned *sour* and *bitter.* A *critic* never seems to grow old gracefully. Note the style of a real judge of the drama, like Charles E. Ellis, whose "History of the Elks" is the most quotable book of its kind in the world, or Richard Henry Little, in many respects the most remarkable writer of our time, and get the aromatic flavor of real criticism!

F. S. CHANFRAU as "SAM" and Burlesque EDWIN FORREST.

I have been a long time coming to my greatest actor, but it has been pleasant along the way, recalling the names of the really great men of the stage. My object has been to show

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WILLIAM E. SHERIDAN.

that only one player of the *tragic* line merits the title "greatest" and a few will recognize his name when I accord supreme commendation to WILLIAM E. SHERIDAN (1839-87).

Yes, SHERIDAN was the "greatest actor" for the reason that he was the only tragic actor of my time who COMPLETELY LOST HIMSELF IN HIS PART.

I saw FORREST in 1870 play *Virginius, King Lear* and *The Gladiator* and in all I saw *Forrest.* When BOOTH played I always saw *B o o t h !* JOHN MCCULLOUGH was always *John McCullough!*

LAWRENCE BARRETT was ever *Barrett!* DAVENPORT was *Davenport!*

SALVINI was *Salvini!* SHERIDAN lost his identity in the character! I call him *greatest actor* because I never thought of *Sheridan* at all; *only the person he represented.*

FORREST was the mightiest *Lear* who ever trod the boards—and he came very near losing his personality in the *Crazy King*—but not quite.

In the rivalry between DAVID GARRICK (1717-79) and SPRANGER BARRY (1719-77), more than a century and a half ago, some rhymester characterized the two performances thus:

"A King! Aye, every inch a King
So Barry doth appear;
But Garrick's quite a different thing,
He's every inch King Lear."

Now, WILLIAM E. SHERIDAN is almost forgotten like our greatest light comedian, JOHN K. MORTIMER, the sterling J. B. STUDLEY or W. H. WHALLEY; and even so picturesque a figure as JOSEPH PROCTOR (stage debut 1839) a great *Macbeth, King O'Neill,* and the unrivaled *Jibbenainosy, Nick of the Woods* is remembered no more.

The generation that cried "Eddy! Eddy! Eddy!" has passed away and his old stamping ground in New York is overrun with strangers from Russia and Italy. J. HUDSON KIRBY is on the *Chatham Bill* with JOHN R. SCOTT. KIRBY, who was wont to wrap himself in the American flag and expire to slow music, is forgotten,

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Wm E. Sheridan as Louis XI.

together with the gallery slogan, "Wake me up when Kirby dies." He died in fact in 1848 and his widow married the sterling tragedian, JAMES STARK.

All that school of acting and actors has disappeared. There are no such actors now! "They don't make them any more."

Four years ago I spent an afternoon at the "Forrest Home" with JOHN JACK, one of the sterling old timers, then close to seventy years of age, who has since passed on. Only two months ago I shook hands with that superb and brilliant actor, F. F. MACKAY, still hale and hearty, and 82 years *young*. A fine player died recently in San Francisco at the age of seventy-three—MCKEE RANKIN. How the boys admired *"Mickey"* Rankin when he played at the Worrell Sisters Theatre, 728 Broadway, New York, in 1868, in Chas. Reade's *"Foul Play,"* and, later, how much we thought of him in *"The Danites"* with sprightly KITTY BLANCHARD as his mate.

There are some "old" *young actors* left—ROBERT MANTELL is a notable player indeed! FORBES ROBERTSON is a superb *Hamlet*.

HENRY MILLER, whose *Frederick Lemaitre* is worthy of the old French actor LEMAITRE himself or FECHTER at his best, is still rated young.

E. H. SOTHERN, the leading exponent of Shakespere to-day, has passed the half century mark and threatens soon to retire. But there is no one like FERGUSON! He was on the stage of Ford's in 1865 when that poor crazy boy, John Wilkes Booth fired the fatal shot at Lincoln. W. J. FERGUSON is vital as an electric wire. Having played thirty years continuously on Broadway he's as lively as the proverbial cricket, and Ferguson is a *great* eccentric actor. Long may he wave! He knows the old traditions of the stage as no one else does now. There is one *real* actor to-day whose characterizations are really wonderful, WILTON LACKAYE! For instance, as *Reb Schmool* in *"The Children of the Ghetto"*—I believe it would be simply impossible to better his old *Rabbi*. His *Schvengali* was great, and the make-up reminded me of SHERIDAN'S *Shylock*. (The picture of *Shylock* in this pamphlet is from a crude drawing, not a photo, as may be seen.)

LACKAYE comes closer to losing himself in some of his parts than any one I have seen since SHERIDAN'S time. FERDINAND GOTTSHALK, too, is a very subtle player, and his character creations are most admirable. WM. E. SHERIDAN disappeared as Sheridan and

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W. E. SHERIDAN
as
"Shylock."

reappeared as *Louis the Eleventh, Shylock, King Lear, Sir Giles* or *Landry* in *"The Dead Heart."* He played the entire tragic line.

Recently I expressed the opinion that SHERIDAN was a greater actor than EDWIN BOOTH, to which W. J. FERGUSON replied, "Well, he knew more of Shakespeare than BOOTH—SHERIDAN was a wonderful actor." Now, FERGUSON is a rare judge. His opinion is valuable. He was in the company with SHERIDAN in Philadelphia. SHERIDAN said to him, "Fergy!" (he always called him Fergy), you are all right in modern *coat* parts, but I beat you in the classics and Shakespeare."

From an old New York publication I copy this: "MR. SHERIDAN has been playing to immense houses in Philadelphia, where he is the rage of the hour."

Another critic has this to say about SHERIDAN'S Louis XI which bears out my contention: "He thoroughly merges his personality in the character." And this is added: *"He leaves no impression of his own personal characteristics*—but exists in the imagination of his audience *only as the character he portrays."*

Again of his *Shylock* a writer says: "That actor is a great artist who does not overstrain his points nor weary his audience, while thoroughly holding attention during a long play. It is not likely that any living actor can better the acting of MR. SHERIDAN in this part. He has an extraordinary power of facial expression, of gesture, and of voice. The audience *forgets the player utterly and only sees Shylock.* SHERIDAN is a true artist."

Frank Leslie's Weekly, Nov. 10, 1883, has this: "It is as *King Lear* that MR. SHERIDAN finds the greatest scope for his *originality* and *force.* He is massive, powerful, regal, from the first; at times as in the famous reply to *Gloster* he is superb, and attains his effects without other aid than his own physical endowment is able to furnish. It is nevertheless in the pathetic passages that his chief reliance is placed. There is such a depth of woe in the discovery of the way he has been duped, and such a brave, pitiful struggle against mere womanish weakness. His appeals are charged to the brim with strangely natural fire. The curse heaped upon *Goneril* is the crazed supplication of an old man who is profoundly con-

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W. E. SHERIDAN
Himself, and in Character
LOUIS XI

scious of his impotence, and wrecks his passion in fruitless floods of tears. And so up to the end we are borne on the stream of the blasted life of the old king, till at last we watch him bending over the sweet face of the dead *Cordelia,* listening at her lips for the sound of the sigh that never comes, caressing with tender fingers the soft ringlets that cluster around that white brow, till the poor, seared brain and the broken heart find peace in eternal stillness. To the last MR. SHERIDAN is master of the situation and leaves upon his auditors the final impression of a noble work."

I possess a number of 1883-84 playbills of the old Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, where, by the way, my friend E. P. Simpson, was manager, and I have his testimony also. One bill is *"The Marble Heart"* with SHERIDAN as *Raphael,* the sculptor. Another, *"A New Way to Pay Old Debts,"* SHERIDAN as *Sir Giles Overreach.* With what terrible passion the tricked and baffled old villian exclaims, as he tries to draw his sword with his paralyzed hand:

"Ha, I am feeble.
Some undone widow sits upon mine arm
And takes away the use ov't; and my sword
Glued to my scabbard with wronged orphans' tears
Will not be drawn."

Another bill is *"The Lyons Mail"*—SHERIDAN as *Dubosc* the convict and *Lesurques* the man of probity and honor. In this dual role he had to differentiate two distinct characters whose outward semblance was the same—and marvelous was his work indeed in both. When the good *Lesurques* is arrested for the bad *Dubosc,* SHERIDAN gave an exhibition away beyond the powers of HENRY IRVING, although it was one of IRVING's most famous and favorite roles.

I saw SHERIDAN in the seventies in a secondary part to the Richelieu of EDWIN BOOTH at Booth's splendid dramatic temple at 23rd St. and 6th Ave., New York.

At that theatre I saw SHERIDAN many times with EDWIN BOOTH. LAWRENCE BARRETT was in the company and it was many years before the famous partnership as co-stars of BOOTH and BAR-

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W. E. SHERIDAN
and
MINNIE DOYLE in
"Our Boarding House."

RETT. BARRETT was a member of the stock like SHERIDAN, though both were stars. ROBERT PATEMAN, BELLA PATEMAN, MARY WELLS, JOS. WHEELOCK and other famous players were favorites at Booth's.

And yet carpers used to say that EDWIN BOOTH surrounded himself with inferior players and *sticks*.

I wish that we might have a few of Booths *sticks* to-day. Because all were not Sheridans and Barretts the critics forsooth *animadverted*—and to *animadvert* is the critic's delight.

I saw SHERIDAN at the Brooklyn Theatre in many parts in the early eighties. He was a facile player like most of the old timers, and played every kind of role. EDMUND KEAN (1787-1833) and the elder BOOTH (1796-1852) we are told played ridiculous loutish parts in farces on the same nights that they held forth as *Richard* or *Othello*.

SHERIDAN was good in everything. At the New Park Theatre, 22nd St. and Broadway, New York, in 1877 SHERIDAN assumed the part of *Joseph Fioretti* in *"Our Boarding House."* Our illustration shows him in a scene with MINNIE DOYLE as *Violet Elligible*. Every trace of the tragic actor has disappeared and he enters into the fun with all of the zest of his fellow players, ROBSON and CRANE who played *Prof. Gregarious Gillypod* and *Col. M. T. Elevator*. He was as blithe as a bob-o-link and eccentric to a degree.

In San Francisco WM. E. SHERIDAN was an enormous favorite for years. He is not forgotten on the Pacific Coast. His fine form and sonorous voice adapted to, and their identity lost in, many roles, together with subtle interpretations of the characters of the myriad minded Shakespeare, made a name for him in California never to be effaced. The East may forget SHERIDAN, but the West will not.

JOSEPH JEFFERSON (1829-1905) writing to me in 1902 about two old players said: "You are quite right about the past swallow-

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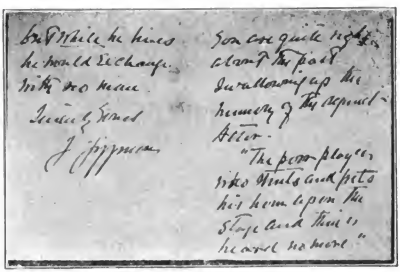
ing up the memory of the defunct actor. The poor player who struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more—but while he lives he would exchange with no man." I append the letter.



We are told that Talma at the beginning of the last century in La Belle France, and Samuel Phelps at Sadlers Wells in London town in the forties were mighty histrions, but America never saw them. Nor did JOHN PHILIP KEMBLE (1757-1823), the brother of MRS. SIDDONS (1755-1831), and the great exponent of the stately paw and pause style of acting, ever cross the Atlantic. His brother, Charles Kemble, and his brother's daughter, Fanny Kemble, came over in 1832.

EDMUND KEAN (1787-1833) whose acting has been described as like "reading Shakespeare by flashes of lightning," appeared in 1825 at the Anthony Street Theatre in New York, the old Park at which he was booked to appear having burned down.

In 1826 he was supported by EDWIN FORREST, then twenty years of age, in Albany. EDMUND KEAN predicted great things for FORREST and the little tragedian was idolized in return ever afterward. Some years before KEAN'S arrival the eccentric and gifted but bibu-

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lous GEORGE FREDERICK COOKE (1756-1812) crossed the ocean in 1810 and he was buried in New York two years afterward.

Another of the great English actors, WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY (1793-1873), made three visits to America, 1826, 1843 and 1848-9. He did not like FORREST and it was FORREST'S fault that a bitter feud was started which culminated in a riot in 8th street near Broadway close by the Astor Place Opera House. The militia shot down over forty people. A number of these never got up again. Such a quarrel would be impossible to-day. MACREADY believed that FORREST by study might refine somewhat on the crude quality of his acting, as he termed it. FORREST was a student all his days and bequeathed a splendid library to his benefaction called the *Forrest Home* for aged actors.

Several critics have said that FORREST'S acting lacked spirituality and his enemies howled at him when he brought his foolish divorce suit against his beautiful wife, Catherine Sinclair, whom he had married in England. FORREST was beaten. He was a bitter hater, and personal considerations obscured the vision of his critics, as well as his own.

But I can testify that he was head and shoulders above all tragic actors, the very greatest except in the matter of losing his identity in his characters. So, while taking exception to all of the bitter critics who tried to write him down, I cannot say that in all respects he was the greatest of tragedians because glorious as his acting was, he never allowed you to lose sight of *Forrest*. The bulk of his large fortune was made as the *Indian Chief, Metamora* the Barbarian *Gladiator Spartacus* and *Jack Cade* the *Bondman of Kent*. Just here let me say that comparisons are not only odious but useless and prove nothing. I am not setting one actor against another even while insisting that there was one greater than any as a *delineator* of character, and while using the words "greatest actor" I do not mean to disparage any actor whatsoever. I admire them *all*.

The meaning of the word criticism is *the finding of* GOOD *qualities* and not *flaws*. Faults should be pointed out so as to be removed to the end that the good may be brought out more clearly.

"One star differeth from another star in glory." We have scripture for this, and in speaking of the old actors I want to praise them *all*. FORREST could not be EDWIN BOOTH, of whom he was jealous. EDWIN BOOTH could not be FORREST, though he admired his acting extremely. For instance in *King Lear* BOOTH said that FORREST had "marvelous power."

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LAWRENCE BARRETT could not be G. V. BROOKE. CHARLES KEAN, son of Edmund, and CHARLES DILLON, Englishmen who appeared in New York in the sixties, were not in the first rank, but they did splendid work for the stage, each in his own way.

Why should we dislike one fine player because we happen to like another? Because JOHN E. OWENS (1824-86) was remarkable as *Caleb Plummer,* the old Toymaker, is no reason why WILLIAM WARREN (1812-88) could not do beautiful work in the same part; nor why W. J. FERGUSON at a later day, as another old maker of playthings should not be admired for his truly wonderful *"Toymaker of Nuremberg."* Another play, but a similar character, simple and true. Let us then be real *critics* in searching for the *good,* the admirable, the finer points of all the players.

Nor do I want to disparage the players of to-day! They don't have a chance! Where can they learn their trade as the old actors did when called on to play anything and everything at short notice. Now they have to rehearse a single part for weeks, and perhaps play it for years.

There is no opportunity to diversify their work by appearing in all kinds of parts with nightly change of bill. They serve a different age!

There was much in the old methods that should have been lost and forgotten long before they were. The fustian and bombast of some of the old plays would not go now; but beyond peradventure "there were giants in those days." And WILLIAM E. SHERIDAN stands out *first* because he made *himself last* in all of his many and diversified parts.

Brown's History of the American Stage (the first small single volume issued in 1870, more than thirty years before the extensive 3-volume work) contains this reference to SHERIDAN:

Born in Boston June 1, 1839. In 1855 he entered the stationery establishment of Benjamin Loring & Co., State street, Boston, where he remained two years and a half, when he quit mercantile business for the drama, making his debut at the Howard Atheneum, Boston, under the management of Jacob Barrow, as *Robin* in *"Town and Country,"* on March 15, 1858. He was next engaged for heavy business at Pike's Opera House, Cincinnati, Ohio, which position he held during the seasons of 1859-60-61. At the breaking out of the rebellion in April, 1861, he joined the Sixth Ohio Volunteer Infantry and subsequently became a captain and acting signal officer.

He served three years in Western Virginia and the Department of the Cumberland. He escaped unhurt through all his term of service until the last month, when he was shot at the battle of Resaca, Georgia, May 14, 1864, while on duty signalling. His right arm was fractured below the elbow, but by skillful surgery and a successful operation his arm was saved.

He was married in Boston September, 1864, to Sarah E. Hayes. He returned to the stage in Cincinnati at Pike's Opera House, where he continued up to its destruction by fire March, 1866. The following year he was leading man at the Olympic Theatre, St. Louis, Mo.

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He has since played in New York, Washington, Boston, New Orleans and Philadelphia. Is leading man at the Chestnut Street Theatre at present." This was written in 1870.

Sheridan went on the stage at nineteen, became leading heavy man at twenty, a soldier at twenty-two, married at twenty-five, and was a leading man throughout the country before he was twenty-nine.

When only twenty-six years old he was billed at Niblo's Garden in *Boucicaults Arrah Na Pouge,* as *Beamish McCoul* (the McCoul). T. H. GLENNY made his first appearance in America in this new play as *Shaun the Post.* JOSIE ORTON was *Arrah Mellish* and MARY WELLS was *Katy.* This was in July, 1865, and SHERIDAN played at Niblo's until EDWIN FORREST came, September 18th, and then continued to appear on FORREST'S off nights in this character of an *Irish Gentleman.* Very different was *The McCoul* from SHERIDAN'S *Shylock.*

The first Mrs. Sheridan was drowned by the sinking of a boat, the *Metis,* on Long Island Sound in 1872. His second wife, Louise Davenport, came of a theatrical family and appeared with him as Parthenia to his Ingomar at the Star Theatre in 1884.

SHERIDAN supported EDWIN BOOTH at the Star Theatre, New York—BOOTH, *Iago;* SHERIDAN, *Othello.* In 1883-4 he played a round of parts with him, and on Saturday nights was the star as *Louis XI* and *Sir Giles Overreach.*

E. L. DAVENPORT is credited with being the greatest *Sir Giles,* but he did not excell SHERIDAN, and another forgotten tragedian, NEIL WARNER, was right up to him in the part. That is saying a great deal, for DAVENPORT was a finished artist.

DANIEL H. HARKINS also appeared on some of BOOTH'S off nights, giving his remarkable impersonation of *Richard Third.*

Before this SHERIDAN had supported BOOTH at the Providence Opera House as early as 1872, also appearing in the support of CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN that year, with whom he had performed at the Boston Theatre when only twenty-one years of age. This was in 1860 and we find him thus early associated with W. J. LEMOYNE and LOUIS JAMES under the management of the veteran Thos. Barry at the Boston Theatre. LOUIS JAMES afterward became leading man at the Boston, but in 1860 he was performing with Col. Ellsworth's company as one of the famous *Zouaves.* He went to the war with Ellsworth in 1861. I saw LOUIS JAMES' famous partner, FRED B. WARDE begin his career at Booth's in New York in the early seventies, an enthusiastic youngster just over from England, and WARDE, like SHERIDAN, is a credit to his profession. His confrere, fun-loving, brilliant LOUIS JAMES has closed his earthly career, but I am happy to say that FRED WARDE is still on the Boards. As a Shakesperian lecturer he was a great success for years.

SHERIDAN played for the benefit of Thos. Barry, the famous old manager, February 7, 1873, at the Boston Theatre in a great bill with ADELAIDE NEILSON, beautiful and beloved NEILSON, the ideal Juliet, and CHARLES W. COULDOCK, another old school tragedian, an actor to the marrow of his bones, a sound Shakesperian who also

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EDWIN BOOTH
as
"Hamlet."

was fond of playing in *"The Willow Copse"* and the *"Chimney Corner."*

Many will remember him in his last great part of *Dunstan Kirke* the stage father of *Hazel Kirke.*

At this Barry benefit were C. Leslie Allen (father of VIOLA ALLEN), and W. R. FLOYD of loving memory, STUART ROBSON, D. H. HARKINS and LOUIS ALDRICH, the father of the Actors' Fund.

STUART ROBSON was a comical player and whole-souled, splendid gentleman withal. Among the host of celebrities at this Barry Benefit were MAFFITT and BARTHOLOMEW in their very wonderful pantomime called *"The Comanches,"* which they played for years.

On May 17, 1873, W. E. SHERIDAN had a benefit at the *Boston,* playing *Raphael* in the *"Marble Heart,"* supported by JOHN W. ALBAUGH and AGNES BOOTH. This same season of '72-3 marked the first appearance in Boston at the Boston Theatre of *Ned Buntline* (Col. E. Z. C. Judson), *Texas Jack* and *Buffalo Bill* as actors in *"The Scout of the Plains."*

Texas Jack had married Mlle. Morlachi, the dancer, and left the "round up" for the *Footlights.* At this time SHERIDAN was thirty-three years old and during this season appeared with various stars in his native city. LESTER WALLACK (1820-88) appeared in *"Ours"* (with Pat Gilmore's famous band in the military scene) and *"Rosedale"* too, with sweet EFFIE GERMON, who has just passed away at the Actors' Home on Staten Island.

FRANK CHANFRAU (1824-84), the original *Mose* in *"A glance at New York"* (in 1848) began in 1872 his first season as *Kit* the *"Arkansas Traveler"* in which part he played a three or four weeks' engagement every year for twelve years at the Boston Theatre. In this play there were two old *beats* always on the lookout for a drink. DAN MAGINNIS and C. LESLIE ALLEN made this *team* the hit of the play.

After CHANFRAU came CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN, ADELAIDE NEILSON and MAGGIE MITCHELL. SHERIDAN had good company that season (1872-3) he was in the Boston Theatre Stock.

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LESTER WALLACK
AS
Angus McAllister
in the "Veteran."

W. E. SHERIDAN'S last appearance in New York was at the People's Theatre. His twenty-two years on the stage after the war were crowded with noble effort and he became the very best tragedian of them all. When he came to the Pacific Coast in 1880 his acting was a revelation to San Francisco, a city that knew good acting. Opening at the *Baldwin* as stock star, he appeared later at the *California* and then at the *Bush Street*.

For a long time he was the talk of the town. Two of his most admired impersonations were Louis XI and *King Lear*, in San Francisco. I asked an old Californian recently what his opinion was of Sheridan and his reply was emphatic, "The best of all!"

It was in far-off Australia that SHERIDAN closed his earthly season, passing away in Sydney May 15, 1887. He had lived forty-eight years.

I was in Australia five years later. SHERIDAN was remembered as a sterling artist and fine gentleman, who played *villains* it is true, but was himself as simple and guileless as a child.

He had never really recovered from the wound received in defense of his country.

There is a fine actor on the boards to-day who is acquainted with the traditions—OTIS SKINNER. His time is filled with romantic roles. The public don't want the classic drama. The world is not the same as it was in the days of PETER RICHINGS, the Placides or Tragedian Barton who taught CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN to act in 1832, nor those later days of BARRETT and SHERIDAN.

R. D. MCLEAN is one of the older generation. His *Brutus* is a Roman indeed. Recently WM. FAVERSHAM tried to graft the latest thought into traditional *Iago*, but the public would not have it, admirable as it was in many ways.

E. H. SOTHERN'S fine *Don Quixote*, a very remarkable performance, perhaps superior to any of his artistic characterizations, did not *draw*, in spite of a marvelous make-up and a merging into the character a la Sheridan. The fault was in the play itself. Had there been a plot as interesting as that of the *"Merchant of Venice,"* SOTHERN'S *Don* would have been performed thousands of times and be one of the *great* historic impersonations like the elder BOOTH'S *Richard*, or EDMUND KEAN'S *Othello*.

Looking back into *Dramatic History*, the first tragic actor who came to America was LEWIS HALLAM (1752). His son, Lewis Hallam, the younger (1740-1808), managed the John Street Theatre in New York and then the first Park Theatre.

JOHN HODGKINSON came in 1793 and died in 1805. JAMES FENNEL, who arrived in 1797, was a very remarkable tragic actor

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who ended his erratic career in 1816. Then the stage was held by the renowned tragedian, THOMAS ABTHORPE COOPER (1776-1849), who long before the era of steamboats and railroads traveled from one city to another, by stage sometimes, but mostly in his own carriage drawn by two horses, *tandem*. He played until the middle thirties, when he retired to private life and lived at Frankford, near Philadelphia, until he died in 1849.

Old Bowery Theatre Rebuilt 1845.

One of his contemporaries was WM. A. CONWAY, a fine tragic actor, who brooded so much over the jibes of the critics about his great stature, 6 ft. 4, when playing Romeo to little Juliets, and Lady Macbeths, that he became insane and jumped overboard from a vessel on a voyage to Charleston, S. C., in 1828. Poor Conway was drowned.

The eccentric genius, GEORGE FREDERICK COOKE, great actor as he was, did not disturb COOPER'S supremacy. COOKE played only two years (1810-12) in America and died here. EDMUND KEAN in 1825 overshadowed COOPER, and the elder BOOTH (1796-1852) about the same time began to be a mighty favorite and so continued as *Richard, Othello, Sir Giles, Pescara, Octavian, Sir Edward Mortimer* and all the lurid, guilty crew of the tragic stage until he died on a river boat coming up from New Orleans to Cincinnati, after his return from California in 1852.

KEAN died in England in 1833. Both KEAN and J. B. BOOTH were little fellows with splendid heads and voices. MACREADY was gaunt and tall. His last visit to the United States was the disastrous one of 1848-49. Anti-English feeling ran high. In Cincinnati, some barbarian in the gallery threw the *carcass* of *a sheep* at him on the stage. MACREADY insisted on adherence to system in acting, going so far as to mark where performers should stand with a piece of chalk, and any departure from his directions called forth his wrath. The elder BOOTH on the contrary was careless in that regard. "Where shall I stand, Mr. Booth?" an actor asked. "Anywhere," answered Booth; "I'll find you wherever you are."

MACREADY left the stage in 1851 and lived as a retired gentleman for over twenty years.

Managers were *actors* in the early days. THOS. WIGNELL, actor and manager of the Chestnut St. Theatre for years, crossed the ocean in 1774 and died in 1803, a few weeks after his marriage to Mrs. Merry. WIGNELL was a good actor and manager, both. His widow, the former Mrs. Merry (1770-1808) married WIGNELL'S partner, WILLIAM WARREN the first, and continued her beautiful impersonations in Philadelphia until 1808 when she passed away.

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WARREN was the father of the Boston favorite, WILLIAM WARREN (1812-88), who for a half century was principal comedian of the Boston Museum. The elder WARREN died in 1832. His partner of many years was WM. B. WOOD (1779-1861), who wrote a very entertaining book of the stage. The three W's—WIGNELL, WARREN and WOOD—occupy a large space in the history of the drama. WOOD survived until 1861, reaching the age of eighty-two.

Two noted tragedians before the war were JAMES ANDERSON (Park Theatre 1844 and Broadway 1853) and W. M. FLEMING (1817-66).

JOHN M. VANDENHOFF (1790-1861) played the tragic line somewhat in the stately style of JOHN KEMBLE, beginning at the *National* in New York in 1837. He returned to England in 1844 and died in London, 1861. His son, GEORGE VANDENHOFF, came to the New York Park in 1842, playing till 1856. when he left the stage for the Reader's Desk, but in 1870 he was back again. I have seen him in the support of CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN at *Booths*, and in Brooklyn at the *Academy of Music*, as *Macbeth* and *Woolsey*.

I was on hand at the farewell performance of CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN at Booth's in the fall of 1874. I was outside, however, among the thousands of wildly enthusiastic people who could not get in. CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN ended her days in her native town, Boston, not long after, in 1876.

A notable *Macbeth* and *Woolsey* was WILLIAM CRESWICK, an English star like most of the tragedians. CRESWICK supported his country woman, ISABELLA GLYN. I saw them at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the same stage on which I had seen EDWIN FORREST in 1870.

EDWIN FORREST was the *American* tragedian, and intensely American he was! Born in Philadelphia in 1806, he had made $300,000 an enormous sum for those days, before he was thirty.

FORREST was a big man, his height two inches short of six feet, but his frame was massive, very different from the *spindle shanks* I have often seen in tragic roles.

From 1819 to 1872 FORREST played and was contemporary with nearly all I have named except the HALLAMS and HODGKINSON.

JOHN HOWARD PAYNE, remembered always as the author of "Home, Sweet Home," was a boy tragedian in 1809, when FORREST was three years old, and he appeared thirty years afterward, long after FORREST had become the first American tragedian.

JOHN MCCULLOUGH traveled with FORREST for years and was his pupil and imitator. MCCULLOUGH was with FORREST in California in 1864-5, and remained to become a favorite on the Coast and a manager of the California Theatre with LAWRENCE BARRETT.

JOHN R. SCOTT, who died in 1856, was another of the FORREST school.

JAMES E. MURDOCH, although he greatly admired FORREST, did not imitate him, nor join the cry that he was too vehement. MURDOCH said: "I never saw an actor who did not put forth his utmost strength in climaxes. FORREST's strength was so much greater than

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any other actor's that he has been called too strenuous, but I do not agree with the judgment that he was so. His *power* was *greater*, that is all."

I have mentioned most of the great tragic actors of the early days, and all but a few of them lived beyond the time of my birth. Some time I may have something to say about great *comedians*.

I have spoken incidentally only of actors in general, my theme being the actors of *tragic* roles and the greatest of these to my thinking was WILLIAM E. SHERIDAN, for the simple reason that he forgot *Sheridan* and lived the *character* he impersonated. There were none just like him.

We might extend our remarks about the eccentricity of most of the old time tragedians. The elder BOOTH for instance selling farm produce and hay from his own farm at Bel Aire, Baltimore, in the market dressed as a farmer; his linguistic powers, his reverence for every form of religion whatever, always uncovering his head when passing any kind of church or synagogue, declaring himself a Mahomedan withal.

N. M. Ludlow, the partner of old Sol Smith in the management of theatres in St. Louis and New Orleans in the first half of the last century, used to tell how JUNIUS BRUTUS BOOTH in the character of Sir Edward Mortimer in the grim old play of *"The Iron Chest"* didn't happen to fall just right in expiring. He got up, came forward, bowed to the audience, went back and expired again. This time he was not suited with his demise, so he arose, came down to the footlights, bowed, and again retired to expire. He repeated the performance until, says Ludlow, "I had to lower the curtain."

* * * * * *

Flynn in his history of the Cork theatres tells of an Irish actor-manager in the days of G. V. BROOKE, whose readings were original. He was called *chowse* because in delivering the line from *Othello*, "I love thee, and when I love thee not, chaos is come again," instead of saying *kaos* he said "chowse," *"chowse* is come again." Ever afterward when his acting pleased the boys they roared at him, "Well done, Chowse." "That's good, Chowse!" This pleasantry infuriated the actor so much that he was wont to *arise* after he had been *killed* in a tragic part, and, waving his sword at his tormentors, threaten to *lick* them if he could ever lay his hands on them.

* * * * * *

One of the actresses in the time of MRS. SIDDONS was called *"Tripe* Hamilton" for the reason that in excusing herself to an audience for not appearing at a benefit for a rival named Bellamy, she said: "As how Mrs. Bellamy had spoken of the people who came to my benefit as *Tripe* people, who made the house smell."

* * * * * *

Before Garrick instituted his reforms, the lordlings and young sparks sat on the stage, so that the performers appeared among their patrons as well as before them. The *nobs* on the stage, the *cobs* in the pit and the *elite* in the boxes. The boxes were partitioned spaces

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in the balcony. The pit is now called orchestra and contained the best seats in the house, usually benches without backs.

About the time gold was discovered in California, in 1849, one of the last of the famous old *pits* disappeared with the closing of *Mitchell's Olympic*, 444 Broadway, New York.

All of the older tragedians were intense egotists and their *characteristics* were more in evidence than their *characterizations*—characterization is the drama's *quintessential*.

The avidity with which the New York public seized upon the unusual character acting of CYRIL MAUDE this winter as the superannuated *Grumpy* and the joy with which the audience followed the alert and relentless logic of the bitter-sweet old criminal lawyer, shows that a new and real character on the stage is immensely relished. J. H. STODDART'S *Money Penny* in *"The Long Strike"* forty years ago is not forgotten.

The old tragedians were great on *points*, but to sink the amazing personality of a *Forrest, a Macready or Kean*—no sir! they couldn't do it! "EDMUND KEAN acted part of his parts rather than ever a whole character," writes Fanny Kemble. KEAN acquired bad habits as a starving stroller before he became famous at Drury Lane. He could not stand prosperity and in his cups was the boon companion of plug uglies and boozers in the *free* and *easies*, so-called, of the slums of London.

MACREADY was a moral man, but of a whining, complaining sort. He never allowed his daughters to see him play, or to enter a playhouse.

These old time tragedy fellows were purveyors of pride and passion. On the stage they were snorting sneerers and chuckling chortlers.

They exulted. They roasted their enemies with hot wild words. They revelled in *Revenge* and *Remorse*.

They were *baffled, thwarted, foiled*. Black looks and fierce frowns alternated sardonic Ha! Ha's!

They could smile beatifically too, sweetly, to the accompaniment of honeyed words spoken in dulcet tones, but always *distinctly*. Again the *smile* would express lofty disdain. Various were the impersonations: sordid misers, prodigal princes, Fortune's favorites and Fortune's fools. A crafty monarch at nine o'clock and a sturdy beggar at eleven, for the bill oft contained three and four plays a night.

I have attended performances at the *Old Bowery* that lasted from eight o'clock until after one in the morning.

The old tragedians were not repressed or subdued like the present day *stage sufferers*, who stand around repressed and subdued and let the audience *suffer* for them. And the audience *does* suffer.

No, they told the crowd all about it, how badly they felt, what they meant to make others feel, and what they intended to *do* and *dare*. How they would "crush the *foe*," and so forth.

Their terrible trials did not trouble us, we were so interested in noting how "beautiful they done it," as the boys said when calling in ecstacy, "Eddy! Eddy! Eddy! Eddy!"

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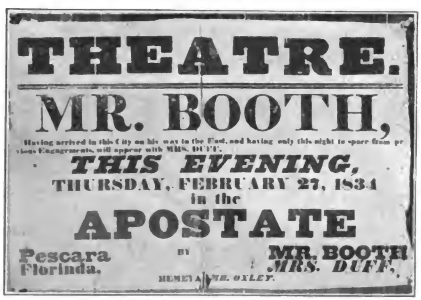
Real actors were not *cuff shooters* or cigaret suckers in those days, and with their good broadswords they belted and basted the *foe* into the middle of next week, or were worsted themselves as *Richard* or *Sir Giles*. The spectators simply went off the hooks with explosive enthusiasm. You could *hear* the *audience* and you could *hear* the players! Actors were not inaudible, indistinct *gabblers* like most of the mummers to-day.

Whether sonorous and resonant, sibilent and hissing, or soft and low, you could always HEAR the spoken word in the days of old. Yea, verily, they were *audible!*

The clear and forcible actors are not all gone. TYRONE POWER is an actor who for a quarter of a century has been an honor to the stage, and honors the best traditions. The first TYRONE POWER (1797-1841), the renowned Irish comedian, was lost at sea in the steamer *President* in 1841. The present TYRONE POWER is different in style, of course, but bears the great name worthily. Though not old, he is of the old school, possessing also all of the merits of the new school, with his deep, haunting voice and towering form. A power on the stage is TYRONE POWER! "More power to him." This is what he says of the old histrions: "Not a managerial harrow can rake from the dramatic soil to-day one seed to plant in rivalry to the glorious fullness of the palmy days.

"The old actor was proud of his bearing. He was athletic. The tempest and passion and toil of a five act tragedy held no terrors for him, for his chest was broad, his torso firm, his lungs (those lungs at which we so love to jeer) were deep and full. Grand, mighty men of the past, I salute you. Censure and praise touches you no more!"


THEATRE.

MR. BOOTH,

Having arrived in this City on his way to the East, and having only this night to spare from previous Engagements, will appear with MRS. DUFF.

THIS EVENING,

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1834

in the

APOSTATE

Pescara — BY — MR. BOOTH

Florinda. — MRS. DUFF.

HENRY A. WILLIAMS, OXLEY.

This Poster used by Junius Brutus Booth in 1834 at Pittsburgh.
Its size was 12x18 inches.

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Old Bowery Stage—1856.
John Brougham as Powhattan
in his Burlesque "Pocahontas."

H. S. RENTON, Publisher

143 N. Wabash Ave., - - - - Chicago, Ill.

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